Airline Pays In Death of Hunt's Wife

Chicago

United Airlines agreed yesterday to pay $[redacted] in damages to the wife of Watergate burglar E. Howard Hunt. She died in a plane crash here Dec. 8, 1972.

Circuit Court Judge David A. Canel approved the settlement in a suit filed by columnist William F. Buckley Jr., executor of the estate.

When the suit was filed in 1973, it asked $2 million in damages. But their lawyer said Buckley and Hunt agreed to the lesser amount because they feared "Watergate fallout" would prejudice the outcome of a jury trial.

Mrs. Hunt was one of 45 persons killed when a United plane crashed in a residential area near the Midway Airport here. Investigators searching the wreckage discovered $10,000 in $100 bills in her suitcase. The source of the money was never fully explained.

Buckley charged in the suit that United improperly operated the airplane. The National Transportation Safety Board later determined that the crash was caused by pilot error.

Several other lawsuits have been filed in connection with the crash.

Buckley has been a close friend of the Hunts. Hunt, a former operative for the Central Intelligence Agency, was prohibited from becoming executor himself because he was convicted as a Watergate burglar.

Associated Press